Calling Attention to a Matter of Urgent Public Importance

Impact of Recent Floods and Cyclonic Storms, particularly in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Pondicherry and action taken by Government in regard thereto

SHRI N. E. BALARM (Kerala): Madam, I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Agriculture to the impact of recent floods and cyclonic stoms, particularly in Kerala Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Pondicherry and the action taken by Government in regard thereto.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR) : Madam, A cyclonic storm which developed over South-west Bay of Bengal on the 11th of November, 1992 intensified into a severe cyclonic storm and crossed South Tamil Nadu coast near Tuticorin on the evening of 13th November, 1992. Moving further north-west, it weakened and emerged in the south-east Arabian Sea as a deep depression on the 14th evening and crossed Karnataka coast on the afternoon of the 17th November. The accompanying monsoon system and the cyclonic storm caused heavy to very heavy rainfall in costal Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Pondicherry. The intense rainfall accompanied by high velocity winds resulted in flash floods and landslides in the high ranges, floods in the rivers, backwaters and the plains and sea erosion in the coastal areas in the affected States and the Union Territory of Pondicherry.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER (Gujarat) : Madam, what about Andhra Pradesh ? There is no mention in this. . .(*Interruptions*) . . .

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : I have not been given any information by the State Government nor has there been any notice . . .(*Interruptions*) . . .

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER : Notice is there. You just see . . .(*Interruptions*) . . .

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : When I get some information about Andhra, I will give you. This has not been replied to by the Government of Andhra Pradesh. When I get it, I will give you. I have got some figures and by way of information I can give. But that sort of information I do not want to give. . .(*Interruptions*) . . .

SHRI N. K. P. SALVE (Maharashtra): Madam, we appreciate the Minister's difficulties. But, keeping in view the sentiments of the people from Andhra Pradesh, I hope he will do justice. . .(*Interruptions*) . . .

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Whatever information the Minister has got, he will give. . .(*Interruptions*) . . .

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : Whatever information I want to give should be based on facts. . .(*Interruptions*) . . .It should be based on facts and it should not be based on fiction. . .(*Interruptions*) . . .

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM (Andhra Pradesh) : Madam, if Andhra is not included, what is the use of our speaking on this ? . . .(*Interruptions*) . . . I think the honourable Members have mentioned". . .cyclonic storm in Tamil Nadu Kerala, Karnataka and Pondicherry." But six coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh have been affected. . .(*Interruptions*) . . .

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER : I hope Andhra also will be included in this. . . (*Interruptions*) . . .

SHRI MOTURU HANUMANTHA RAO (Andhra Pradesh) : Madam, it is not a question of sentiments but material loss to people. . .(*Interruptions*) . . .

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Your sentiments will be taken into account. . . (*Interruptions*) . . . Don't unnecessarily start commenting . . . (*Interruptions*) . . . Your sentiments is that your State is not included. The Minister says they have not replied and he will give whatever information he has got. You are a senior Member. Don't just start commenting. The Minister will take care of the problem. . . (*Interruptions*) . . .Whatever information he has he will give. After all, what is there in a name, if he is going to look after ?

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : Yes. Whatever is possible, whatever can be done, we will do.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Everything concerning Andhra will be looked after by him ! . . .(*Interruptions*) . . .

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : I cannot discriminate against Andhra Pradesh. There is no question of discrimination.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : If it is affected by cyclone, it is affected by cyclone.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : I have the same feelings for everbody.

The coastal districts bore the immediate onslaught of the cyclonic storm resulting in loss of lives and property while inland districts witnessed damage due to intense rainfall and landslides. The Government of Tamil Nadu undertook relief measures in the affected areas including evacuation of people from inundated areas to safe sheltters, ex-gratia payment to the next of kin of the deceased, compensation for damaged houses and issue of essential commodities free of cost to those rendered homeless.

The State of Kerala had earlier experienced excess rainfall and floods in October, 1992 resulting in heavy loss to life and property in the same Southern districts of Kerala which have been affected again in November, 1992. The relief machinery which had been geared up for the October floods responded promptly to the crisis to undertake relief measures for the affected population. 22,000 families were evacuated to safe places and 471 Relief Camps for 17,000 families were operated by the State Government.

In Karnataka, 9 districts were affected by the cyclonic storm resulting in damage to standing crops, buildings, roads and bridges and loss of human lives and livestock. Relief measures including exgratia payment to the dependants of people who lost their lives, compensation to those rendered homeless, supply of essential commodities and providing medical facilities to the affected population have been undertaken by the State.

The Union Territory of Pondicherry was also affected by the cyclonic storm causing damage to property and several huts. The U.T. Administration has taken up relief measures to repair the damage caused by the cyclonic storm.

The Ninth Finance Commission recognised the need for bestowing greater autonomy and responsibility on the State Governments in managing the challenge posed by recurrent natural calamities. For this purpose, the Commission recommended the creation of a CRF to be operated by the State Governments. 75% of the CRF is contributed by the Government of India and the balance 25% is contributed by the States concerned.

As directed by the Prime Minister, I visited the flood affected States on the 16th & 17th November, 1992 to review the relief and rehabilitation measures being undertaken by the States. I also undertook an aerial survey of the several severely affected districts in the States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and the Union Territory of Pondicherry. I wish to state that the administration in the flood affected areas has responded admirably in providing succour to the affected population and in undertaking other relief measures. I would like to compliment the Governments of the States affected and the UT Administration of Pondicherry for responding quickly to the crisis caused. On our part, the Government of India, recognising the need to supplement the efforts of the States and with a view to assist them has also taken prompt action to augment the resource position of the affected States.

I am happy to inform the House that immediately on the occurrence of the disaster, the Prime Minister released funds to the States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and the Union Territory of Pondicherry from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund. Advance of release of the Central share of CRF amounting to Rs. 21.93 crores and Rs. 10.12 crores respectively to Tamil Nadu and Karnataka has been made. As regards Kerala, advance release amounting to Rs. 17.43 crores had been made in October, 1992. In addition, funds have also been released in advance under various on-going development programmes such as Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) and Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP) to Kerala to augment the State's resources for undertaking comprehensive relief and rehabilitation works. These funds would enable the State Governments to adequately meet the relief expenditure as also to take up rehabilitation and restoration work.

I may assure the House that the Centre fully shares the hardship and suffering caused to the affected population in the Southern States by the cyclonic storm and would do all that is within its powers to reach succour and enable them to stand on their feet once again.

Madam, I would like to assure that I will collect all the information regarding Andhra Pradesh and place it before the House. And whatever....

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM : Madam, it is very unfair....

उपसभापति : मंत्री जो बोल रहे हैं, बीच में न बोलिए।...

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM : Madam, may I make a submission ? This is really unfair. Even if there is no notice from any of the Members from Andhra Pradesh, the Government is aware that some portion of Andhra Pradesh is affected by rains and floods.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : I will try to... (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM : This is most unfortunate. This statement did not contain even a single sentence about Andhra Pradesh. The paddy crop in more than ten lakhs of acres which is about to be harvested is damaged.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : You will get your chance to speak.

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM : There is not even a single word about Andhra Pradesh in this statement and in protest, I am walking out of this House.

[*At this stage the hon. Member left the Chamber.*]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Please don't walk out; you can sit here and speak about it. I know the suffering is there and the Minister has assured the House.

SHRI MOTURU HANUMANTHA RAO : He must give the report fully.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN He will. But you need not walk out.

SHRI ARANGIL SREEDHARAN (Kerala): In a document circulated by the State Government of Kerala to the Members of Parliament from Kerala, at a meeting, it is stated that 56,000 families were evacuated. But the hon. Minister's document says that only 22,000 families were evacuated. Again, the hon. Minister's statement says that relief camps for 17,000 families were operated but according to the document circulated by the State Government, 32,000 families were accommodated in 609 relief camps. The Minister is misleading the House.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Your name is there and you can speak about it when you participate.

SHRI ARANGIL SREEDHARAN : I can speak about it; that is a different matter. But the Minister is giving wrong information and is misleading the House. I am producing the documents and the facts which he can verify from the State Government. On what basis he is giving these figures, I want to know. This is very wrong.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: If in your opinion, the Minister has given misleading information, when your turn comes, you can speak. But regardless of whatever be the number of families evacuated, the main thing is that people have been suffering and let us go ahead with this calling attention motion and when the appropriate time comes when you speak, you can raise it.

SHRI ARANGIL SREEDHARAN : I am saying it on the basis of facts.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : I have stated whatever information I have been able to collect, because it is the State machinery which gives me the facts and the figures, and if there is anything left to be rectified, I shall do so; I have no intention to mislead the hon. Member or the House. How do I stand to benefit by giving any wrong information ? I do whatever is possible and give the correct information that is available with me. I have got the machinery there to supply the information and I can assure the House that there is no intention on their part to give any wrong information.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : According to his statement, he is not saying that enough has been done; he says less work

is being done, and he is not taking any credit for doing more work which he wants to do. But if you feel, in your opinion...

SHRI ARANGIL SREEDHARAN : My point is, he is trying to play down the intensity of the problem.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : That is the reason for admitting this calling attention to enable you to make your point and the Central Government is serious about it.

SHRI N.E. BALARAM : Madam, I have been listening to the speech of the hon. Minister with keen interest. But I would say that it was quite unsatisfactory and to some extent disappointing. The hon. Minister was there, though only for a few hours; he was there in Trivandrum and he was there in Tamil Nadu also according to my information. He personally collected information from the officers and the State Governments. So, the intensity of the tragedy might have been known to the Government.

So far as the situation in Kerala is concerned, according to my information—if I am wrong, the hon. Minister can correct me—only Rs. 10 lakhs from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund were given to them in case of the second floods; I am not talking of the first, the second flood situation was so very serious, the Government of Kerala was given only Rs. 10 lakhs from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. Nothing more was given to them. I know. I am not taking the time of the House to go into the question of Kerala Government's functioning. I know the situation there. The Kerala Government could not manage things well.

Generally speaking, Madam, monsoon is a blessing as far as the people of Kerala are concerned. But unfortunately, this time, this year, it has been a calamitous monsoon for the entire South, particularly, for Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Of course, it has also affected Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Pondicherry. According to my knowledge, five or six coastal districts in Andhra Pradesh have been completely devastated. It has affected all the Southern States.

No proper or accurate estimate of the damage has, so far, been made. I know it will take some time. Therefore, the actual extent of damage caused to crops, houses, shops, schools and other infrastructure is not known yet. In many areas, large stretches of roads and bridges have been completely destroyed. Communication has become difficult in many parts of these States. This is one part of the situation.

The poignant agony and painful plight of lakhs of common people in these areas, one can imagine. Such is the situation. One has to go there and see the intensity of the crisis faced by the people in these four Southern States. Of course, there is difference in the degree, but the fact is that this calamity has affected all the four Southern States. Preliminary estimate shows that more than 190 persons were killed in Kerala. The statistics given by the hon. Minister are not complete. Of course, he will be getting more statistics. According to the latest information I have been to gather, the total number of deaths in Kerala was 190, more than 230 in Tamil Nadu, and more than 40 in Karnataka. According to my information, there were no deaths in Andhra Pradesh and Pondicherry.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY (Pondicherry) : Five in Pondicherry.

SHRI N. E. BALARAM : I stand corrected. The extent of loss in terms of crops, houses, cattle, coconut and rubber plantations has not been assessed yet. Lakhs of acres of cultivated land have been flooded away. I have visited several areas and I have seen with my own eyes the devastation caused to lakhs of acres of paddy land. They are completely destroyed. Six to seven feet of water was there for a week. According to the peasants, the entire cultivation has collapsed. The agony and misery of the common people is unimaginable. Thousands of people are still living in relief camps. Even today, they are in the relief camps, in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. In Kerala alone, there are about 500 relief camps. They are still operating. I do not want to mention the number of families. As Mr. Sreedharan has said, as per the memorandum submitted by the Kerala Government to the Centre, the total number of families affected is 56,000. But this number has

gone upto 63,000, after the submission of the memorandum, I do not know what is the exact number now. Of course, the floods have receded. The situation might have improved a little bit. But a large number of people are still living in relief camps. Nobody knows what will happen to the future of these people because many of them have lost their houses. They cannot go back to their houses. Where are the houses to go to ? As many areas are silted, I do not know how the peasants are going to cultivate again. That is another question. Silted lands cannot be immediately cultivated. The situation is really very shocking. According to the quick estimate made by the Kerala Government, the total loss will come to Rs. 530 crores. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister has already stated that the loss of Rs. 500 crores was there in Tamil Nadu. In Kerala about 8000 houses have been completely destroyed. In the memorandum submitted by the Chief Minister they have stated that it would come to 5660 or something like that, but more number of houses have been destroyed. In Tamil Nadu about 2 lakh huts have been completely washed away. That is what I read from the newspapers and learnt from my freinds. I think the Tamil Nadu Members would explain the whole thing in detail. So, I do not know what the people can do. The people who are there in the relief camps do not know where to go or how they can go back to their houses. The respective State Governments—I am not mentioning the State—are offering Rs. 5000 to construct a house. Is it possible to construct a house with Rs. 5000 /- only ? I do not think. You would not be able to construct even a good hut with an amount of Rs. 5000.

SHRI V. GOPALASAMY (Tamil Nadu) : In Tamil Nadu, they are offering Rs. 500, not Rs. 5000.

SHRI N. E. BALARAM : I am talking of Kerala.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Tamil Nadu Members will explain that.

SHRI V. GOPALASAMY : I am envious of Kerala.

SHRI N. E. BALARAM : In Kerala even to construct a low-cost house, a two-roomed house, you require about 30,000 to Rs. 40,000. What can they do with this amount of Rs. 5000 ? They can do nothing. I am only explaining the difficult situation and not criticising anybody because this is the creation of nature, not of the Central Government.

Then the number of partially damaged houses is much more. I will come to that later. In Tamil Nadu, I am told, about 2000 fishing boats are either destroyed or missing. So, you can understand the situation. In addition to this, the landslides have worsened the situation. The landslides occurred in hilly areas, like Pattanamthitta, Idukki, and Trivandrum. The situation has worsened and reclamation and rehabilitation has become very very difficult. People of these areas hardly recoupled from the ravages of October floods that the landslides took place. So, within a spell of five weeks the people of Kerala had the bear the burnt of the fury of nature twice and the total loss would come to about Rs. 1100 crores. This is the primary estimate of the Kerala Government. This is the loss and in this background we have to tackle the problem of rehabilitation, but what is the attitude of the Central Government ? He has made in his statement very clear that they are going to help the State Governments on the basis of the Ninth Finance Commission's proposals and suggestions. This is the attitude of the Central Government. I am sorry to say that the response of the Central Government is not at all satisfactory. We cannot solve the problem with this attitude. I do not know the financial position of the Tamil Nadu Government. I know the financial position of the Kerala Government. Are you thinking that by offering Rs. 21 crores or even Rs. 100 crores, the problem faced by the Kerala people can be solved now ?

I ask you a very sincere question. Last time, for the October floods you have given Rs. 21 crores. If money from the allocations for the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and some other schemes is spent in four or five districts only, then what will happen to the Yojana in the entire State ? Is the Yojana a farce ? So, there is no meaning in saying that you are prepared to give some advance from the Plan allocations,

from this or that scheme, to the State Government. I think, that way we cannot solve the problem. So, my first request is, you should give up that idea. If you want to help the Kerala people—I hope you want to help them—because I understand that the Prime Minister is going there on the first of next month. He will be getting more facts; he will be knowing more things about what is happening in Kerala. So, my main criticism is that the Central Government does not understand the magnitude of the problem—I am sorry to say that. So far the Government has not treated this as a national calamity to render special assistance on that basis. They are thinking only in terms of some advances from the Plan allocations. Really speaking, this is not the way to solve the problem.

Then you are trying to limit your response to releasing, in advance, some meagre sums to the Calamity Relief Fund as suggested by the Ninth Finance Commission—that is what you have stated in your statement. There is a limit to that. Whatever you say about the Calamity Relief Fund as suggested by the Ninth Commission, there is a limit to that even as far as Kerala is concerned, as far as every other State is concerned. Within that limit I don't think any Government can solve the problem.

The affected area in Kerala is comprising more than seven districts, which means more than a crore of people are involved in this severe crisis. What can they do with just Rs. 21 crores ? How many houses can they construct, how much area can they desilt to start cultivation again, how many bridges can they construct, how many roads can they repair and how many school buildings can they construct ? Many, many school buildings have collapsed. So, I don't think in this way you can solve the problem as far as Kerala is concerned.

I want to tell you, I am for the unity of the country : you know me perfectly well. But there is a feeling, at least in Kerala—I don't know about other parts of Southern India—that we are getting only stepmotherly treatment from you. There is a feeling. Right or Wrong, it is there. It is high time to correct that feeling... (*Interruptions*)..

Do you want me to go into this ? If I start discussing the problem, there are a number of problems for us. You know them. Don't think that we are sharing that feeling, but that feeling is there. I am drawing your attention to it. That is there. This is the main criticism. So, this is the time for you to act in a proper, cautious, way to help the Kerala Government, to help the Kerala people, to solve the problem. So, I take this opportunity to suggest that at least 50 per cent of the entire relief and rehabilitation expenditure must be borne by the Centre. The Kerala State cannot solve this problem, I tell you. Their revenue income will come to about Rs. 3,000 crores per year, and their expenditure will come to more than Rs. 3,000 crores per year. How can they solve this problem ? You know that pretty well. I don't want to discuss the financial problems of Kerala here. But I can tell you one thing. If you give only Rs. 20 crores or Rs. 10 crores or Rs. 10 lakhs, I think, no man, no Chief Minister, nobody can solve the problem of Kerala at present because the damage is such, the difficulties are such, the people involved are in such a large number and the destruction is so devastating. It is total rebuilding of five or six districts once again. So, what I am suggestting is that 50% of the relief and rehabilitation expenditure should be borne by the Centre. Of course, when I say that 50 per cent of the expenditure must be borne by the Centre, it must not be given by way of loans, but it must be grants. A State like Kerala cannot pay back the loan. Loan is the biggest burden for them. This is my first request. I want to make this very clear. This is the first request that we have to make.

Secondly, I am suggesting that the Centre should call an urgent meeting of these five Chief Ministers, the Finance Minister, the Agriculture Minister and the Prime Minister and your Cabinet Committee or whatever it is. Sit along with them and find out solutions. If you do not do this in time, I don't know what will happen to that unfortunate part of the country. I say that it is an unfortunate part of

the country. Nobody is giving any special attention to that. Ministers are coming and going. That is there, but nothing happens.

I am not making any personal criticism. I have read in the papers that our Agriculture Minister was talking to the Kerala people, "Why don't the Kerala people abide by the advice given by the Gita ?" What does the advice given by the Gita mean ? "The Gita" has a different meaning. You said :

कर्मण्येवा धकारस्ते मां फलेषु कदाचनः ।

This is what you said. This is what the papers reported. I do not know whether you said it or not, but all the papers have reported it. "Don't think about the result, but you do your duty"—this is the meaning of that sloka in Gita. This is the advice you have given. I give the same advice to you : Don't think about the result. You do your duty. Your duty is to save the people there. You are also responsible. I want to say here very clearly that the Centre is responsible to save the lakhs and lakhs of dying people in Kerala. It is not the duty of the State Government alone. I want to make it clear. On legal grounds or on financial grounds or on constitutional grounds if you are going to argue like this about the lives of lakhs and lakhs of people, that means you are telling them to die. This should not happen. This is my request, Madam.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY : Madam Deputy Chairman, thank you for giving me this opportunity to participate in the Calling Attention on an important subject of the devastating floods and cyclonic storm affecting crores of people in the southern parts of the country, brought by the hon. senior Member of this House, Shri Balaram.

Madam, I went through the statement given by the hon. Minister. I do understand the limitations of the hon. Minister because in the statement he cannot cover all the points that have been given by the State Governments concerned.

Madam, it was an unprecedented cyclonic storm and floods that affected the southern parts of the country. Though we do have the north-east monsoon, this time the cyclone was of a magnitude that we have not experienced for the last more than 20 years. Madam, in the last year also we were in the grip of a cyclonic storm. The cyclonic storm had affected Tamil Nadu and some places in Pondicherry where there were scanty rains. The Ramanathapuram district, Tirunelveli district and some desert areas received heavy rains and those places were inundated. The hon. Minister has gone there and has seen those places. He met the flood-affected people and listened to their sufferings. Our hon. Prime Minister was kind enough to depute the hon. Minister for Agriculture and the State Minister for Agriculture to visit the flood-affected areas. They were accompanied by the Minsiters belonging to the State of Tamil Nadu and Kerala the five districts—Tirunelveli, Kattabomman, Kanyakumari, Chidambaranar and Ramanathapuram in Tamil Nadu, the cash crops which were raised by the farmers and the coconut crops in the coastline areas were severely damaged. Not only that, were breaches on the roads. bridges have been damaged and the people have lost their lives in spite of the warning given by the State Government to the people living in the low-lying areas.

The other day, the hon. Member, Shri V. Gopalsamy was referring to the flash floods which occurred in Vikrama Singapura, a low-lying area where thirty people have been washed away by the floods. The people who were living in the first floor of the brick buildings could survive and the people who were living in the huts have been washed away. In the hilly tracts of the Madurai district where plantations are there, more than 100 people have lost their lives because of the landslides. So far as the losss of life is concerned, this is the sorry state of affairs. The rains were very heavy and the entire area was flooded and inundated.

Madam, we have to see the plight of the poor agriculturists and the agricultural labourers who are living by the side of the fields. These poor agriculturists and the agricultural labourers are unable to return to these fields even today because of the wetness of the ground. They are unable to go there and occupy their houses. The Government of Tamil Nadu have taken up various relief measures. They have

been providing relief to the people who were affected by the damage to the crops, loss of houses and other things. Within their means they have been trying to help the floods victims. Everybody knows the financial limitations of the State Government of Tamil Nadu and other State Governments in the Southern region. Whatever financial assistance has been given by the Centre to the States for various works, they are utilising that money for these schemes. This is a natural calamity for which the Central Government has to come to the rescue of the States. It is not the responsibility of the State Government alone to take up relief works, the Centre also should help them.

As soon as the Prime Minister came to know I am thankful to him—about the damages caused to the States due to floods, he was kind enough to grant funds from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund to Tamil Nadu, Kerala and also my State, Pondicherry. Madam, the hon. Member, Mr. Balaram, explained the situtiion in Kerala. On 15th November, I was in Cochin. I saw the effects of the rains on 13th to 15th. The speed of the wind was more than 80 kilometres per hour. There were torrential rains; roads were damaged and bridges breached. People living in low-lying areas had been brought to the upper ridges. That was the situation in Kerala. The plight of farmers in Kerala was worse because there were two cyclones in two months, one in October and the other in November. Even after the first cyclone, the hon. Minister for Agriculture visited there. The hon. Minister also sanctioned funds from the general funds for the pupose of giving them relief. Madam, in Karnataka also, immediately after the Chief Minister took the oath of office, he had to visit the cyclone-affected areas. The coastal areas of Raichur, Bellary and other areas have been affected by the floods because of the cyclonic storm.

Madam, Pondicherry, our State, is a very small State. The financial assitance given by the Centre as well as the mobilisation of resources as far as my State is concerned is very limited. We are in the midst of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. The cyclone did not leave any of the States. It affected all the States and since we are in between, we are also affected. Pondicherry was affected. Karaikkal which is near the Thanjavur District of Tamil Nadu is affected; mahe which is near the Malabar area of Kerala is also affected; and Yenam near the coastal area of Andhra Pradesh is also affected. More than 30,000 hectares of land on which crops had been raised in Karaikkal, which is called 'the Granary of Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry' have been affected by the floods. The poor farmers who had raised banana and sugarcane crops have lost them because of the cyclonic rain. People not only died because of the cyclonic storm but because of the after-effects of it like Cholera and other diseases also. The hon. Prime Minister was pleased to grant funds from the P.M.'s Relief Fund. The hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister for Agriculture visited the flood-affected areas. Immediately they went and saw the havoc caused by the floods. I am thankful to both the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister for Agriculture. They got first-hand information about the loss of lives and the suffering of the people. Most of the people affected are below the poverty-line, especially people who are living in villages. Small and marginal farmers have been affected. People in tea and rubber plantations have been affected in kerala. There is a general complaint from all the States affected that the relief measures that have been provided by the Centre are inadequate. The State Governments asked for Rs. 530 crores, Rs. 1100 crores and Rs. 300 crores. We sought Rs. 5 crores. All these memoranda have come to the hon. Minister for Agriculture. Madam, the Centre has to lessen the burden of the States since it is a natural calamity. The hon. Minister has said in his statement that the Ninth Finance Commission has fixed the norms. No doubt the Ninth Finance Commission has fixed the norms. But they are under natural, normal circumstances. When the magnitude of the havoc caused by the floods and the losses sustained and the suffering of the people affected are enormous, the Centre has to give additional funds to the State for the purpose of ameliorating the sufferings of the people of the regions. The States can ask assistance only from the Centre. It is the Centre that has to provide relief to the people.

Madam, I would like to ask the hon. Minister one pertinent question. Madam, the Central team visited the flood affected areas. The hon. Minister visited those areas. What were the observations made by the Central team? I would like to know the details about the losses suffered as far as roads and bridges are concerned so that the total loss sustained by various State Governments can be ascertained.

Madam, one of the senior Members said that 50 per cent of the burden has to be borne by the Centre. I totally agree with him. Madam, within the resources available with the State Governments, they are not in a position to give relief to the people. Under the 20-Point Programme, we are giving relief to the people who are below the poverty line. That is a regular scheme. The hon. Minister has given about Rs. 120 crores to Kerala including the budgeted funds. That is not going to solve the problem. Then the budget allocation that has been made for various schemes will have to be cut off and the State Governments will suffer.

Madam, as far as Pondicherry is concerned, paddy is the main crop. But I find that the hon. Minister has conveniently omitted the demands of the State Governments concerned. In his statement, he has not said anything about the assistance asked for by the State Governments concerned. If you go through the statement, you will find that a Central team visited those areas. The hon. Minister also visited the flood affected areas and the hon. Prime Minister is going to visit those areas tomorrow to see for himself the effect of the recent floods. You have taken interim measures according to the recommendations of the Ninth Finance Commission. I would like to know as to what other assistance you are going to provide to the people who are suffering. They cannot get food even. The relief camps are going on and the State Government is spending the money. Whatever funds the State Government have, they are going to exhaust them on natural calamities. What assistance are you going to give as an interim measure? What are we doing during natural calamities? We are just seeing only the immediate remedy and we are not looking into the problem from a longer perspective to arrest the havoc that is caused by natural calamities. Madam, in some States, in cyclone-prone areas, relief buildings have been constructed. In some of the States, they are there. In some of the States, in the cyclone-prone areas, relief camps have been build. Even relief shelters have been built. In Tamil Nadu, they are there. I do not know whether they are there in Kerala or not. Not only that. The problem of the effect of cyclone is very much because we are not allowing water to remain stagnant in the lakes. We are not allowing water to remain in the lakes or in the dams. We are just allowing the lakes to silt so that water is not absorbed there. The result is that the intensity of flood is so much that it is causing havoc. The Ministry of Agriculture has been issuing directions to this effect from time to time. I am not saying that the Ministry of Agriculture has not given directions. But the State Government concerned should ensure the retention of water in various lakes, ponds and dams so that the havoc that is caused by the floods, will be minimised if not eliminated altogether. From that angle, a plan should be prepared by the State Governments with the assistance of the Central Government for the purpose of reducing the flood havoc.

The hon. Minister, in his last sentence, has said : "I assure the House that the Centre fully share the hardships and the suffering caused to the affected people in the southern districts by the cyclonic storm and we will do all that is within our power so that succour reaches them and enables them to stand on their own feet once again." It is too general a thing. I thank the hon. Minister for sharing the grievances of the affected people. But what is the outcome? What assistance the hon. Minister is going to give to the people who are affected. The agricultural labourers should be provided free rations for a certain period so that they are able to earn their livelihood. The State Government is providing only a little relief to the people who are affected. Apart from the assistance that is provided under the Ninth Finance Commission, what is the assistance of the Central Government? That is the demand of all the

Members in this House. Being Agriculture Minister, the Agriculture Minister will claim credit for the highest targeted production in foodgrains in the country. When there is a flood and havoc is caused and crops are lost, how can the farmers give more production in the country? It is not only the responsibility of the State Government, it is the responsibility of the Central Government also. There is a feeling among the people of Southern States that they have not been given their due share whenever there is a drought or a flood in the Southern Region of this country. Therefore, I would like to submit to the hon. Agriculture Mnister—I do not blame him that he has ignored the Southern States—that feeling should be removed and for that immediate relief from the Centre should be provided. We know they are in financial difficulties. In spite of that, the Central Government can spell out, apart from the amount provided by the Ninth Finance Commission, what amount they are going to give. The affected States have demanded the amount according to the gravity of the situation for the purpose of giving immediate relief to the people who are suffering. What is the amount you are going to give? This kind of a statement is not going to help us in any way. Therefore, Madam, I would like to know from the hon. Agriculture Minister three important points. Number one is whether he is going to share the burden of these States as far as the people who are affected by the natural calamity are concerned. Number two is what the report submitted by the Central Government after their visit to the affected areas is. Number three. There is a feeling in the minds of the people of Southern States that the Central Government is neglecting them. That feeling should be removed. I request the hon. Minister to announce in this House what additional funds they are going to provide to these States for the purpose of ameliorating the conditions of the people of the Southern Region who are affected by floods and cyclonic storm. (ends)

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY : Madam Deputy Chairman, nature has proved its cruel might and outrageous fury on 13th November through the severe cyclonic strom. The brunt of the havoc was mostly borne by the three southern districts of Tamil Nadu—Kanyakumari, Nellai Kattabomman and Chidambarnar. Madam, I come from Nellai Kattabomman district and scenes of pathos, scenes of death and destruction, scenes of agony and anguish, scenes of wailing mothers and weeping children come to my memory and come before my eyes even today. When I visit those areas, I shudder to remember the scene of decomposed bodies floating in the river. Madam, such a heavy toll of human lives and loss of property we have never imagined in our district because the cyclone prone areas, mostly the coastal areas, Nagapattinam and Rameswaram, are usually the seriously affected areas whenever depression from the Gulf of Mannar produces cyclones. But this time in all the southern districts hefty trees were uprooted and thousands and thousands of families had lost all their belongings. I had been there yesterday. I am very sorry to say that those people who had lost their homes, hearths and huts were asked to take shelter in the school buildings. The schools were open and they had been asked to vacate. These people have no place to go. Of course, our hon. Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Balram Jakhar, immediately rushed to the affected States. My State is known for its culture of hospitality for thousands of years. When somebody comes to our house, enters our doorstep, we extend our hospitality. That has been our custom. When the hon. Minister rushed there to find out ways and means to wipe out the tears and render assistance—I don't want to put the blame on anybody, but I want to share my pain about what happened—there was nobody from the State Government to receive the team headed by Mr. Balram Jakhar. I don't know what happened and why it happened. The Finance Minister of the State was readily available there in Madras. I don't know whether prior information, advance information, of their visit was given to the State Government. That might have been done. But the sufferers are the people of Tamil Nadu. Of course, tomorrow the Prime Minister is also going there. There will be an aerial survey. All right. To what I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister for Agriculture is the financial assistance which is nothing but a pittance. There is

a proverb in Tamil : *Aanaipasiku sola pori*. That means, give a grain of corn to a starving elephant. What you have announced is a drop in the ocean. You have announced Rs. 10 lakhs. What is it ? And then you have announced Rs. 21.93 crores from the CRF. The statement of our hon. Minister simply says, "These funds would enable the State Governments to adequately meet the relief expenditure."

Madam, the State Government has demanded Rs. 530 crores. That is an under-assessed and under-estimated amount of relief. I want to give facts and figures. The total loss is about thousand crores of rupees worth of property and you are giving Rs. 21.93 crores. It may be due to the fact that the State Revenue Minister had made a statement that the amounts for relief measures, that is, essential commodities, dhoties, sarees and rice, were given from their party coffers, from the personal coffers of the Chief Minister, not from the Government coffers. It appeared in the press. So, the Central Government might have come to the conclusion that if the party itself is there to render assistance, the damage must be very small and they could meet the situation. Such an inference can be drawn. If the Revenue Minister makes a statement for three days that they have given it from the party coffers, what would people in Delhi think ? I am really very much worried about the situation because every day cholera deaths are reported from the hospitals in the three districts. When most of the areas of villages and towns are submerged and people cannot get a bucket of drinking water, I just recall S. T. Coleridge. "Water, water everywhere, not a drop to drink". Because proper precautionary measures were not taken deaths due to cholera were reported in every hospital in the last six months. Most of the cases are not reported. It has become a terrible problem. My friend Mr. Balaram, was referring to the amount of Rs. 5000. "What can people do ? How can they construct houses ?" With Rs. 5000 they cannot construct houses. That is a genuine grievance of the people of Kerala. But here in my State, Rs. 500, in some cases Rs. 250 is being given.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Now we have to adjourn the House for lunch. We will take up Calling Attention—further discussion—after lunch if the Members so agree.

The House then adjourned for lunch at thirty minutes past one of the clock.

The House reassembled after lunch at thirty five minutes past two of the clock.

The Vice-Chairman (Shrimati Jayanthi Natarajan) in the Chair.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN) : Hon. Members, with your leave, I call upon the Minister to introduce the Bill which was not done in the morning.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

The circumstances which had necessitated immediate legislation by the Multimodal Transportation of Goods Ordinance, 1992

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER) : Madam, I beg to lay on the Table a statement (in English and Hindi) explaining the circumstances which had necessitated immediate legislation by the Multimodal Transportation of Goods Ordinance, 1992 [Placed in Library *See* No. LT-2791/92]

THE MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION OF GOODS BILL, 1992

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER) : Madam, I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill to provide for the regulation of the multimodal transportation of goods, from any place in India to a place outside India, on the basis of a multimodal transport contract and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : Madam, I introduce the Bill.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN) : We will